



The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY¹ 2016 Estimates as of Oct 20, 2017 • No. 24

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2016 data²

Numbers At A Glance

Fiscal Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	396,966	400,911	414,435	427,444	437,465
Number entered foster care during FY	251,352	254,719	264,364	268,720	273,539
Number exited foster care during FY	239,496	238,892	236,906	243,043	250,248
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	101,945	104,395	108,068	111,358	117,794
Number waiting to be adopted whose parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated during FY	58,240	58,681	61,012	62,093	65,274
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during FY	52,025	50,820	50,671	53,556	57,208

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2016 • N=437,465

Age as of September 30th	Years
Mean	8.5
Median	7.8

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	31,295
1 Year	8%	36,942
2 Years	8%	33,034
3 Years	7%	28,754
4 Years	6%	25,607
5 Years	5%	23,190
6 Years	5%	21,999
7 Years	5%	21,580
8 Years	5%	20,957
9 Years	4%	19,546
10 Years	4%	18,006
11 Years	4%	16,858
12 Years	4%	15,984
13 Years	4%	17,077
14 Years	4%	18,831
15 Years	5%	22,034
16 Years	6%	24,835
17 Years	6%	26,166
18 Years	2%	8,353
19 Years	1%	2,834
20 Years	0%	2,129

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	227,248
Female	48%	210,166

Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	16,572
Foster Family Home (Relative)	32%	139,017
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	45%	196,446
Group Home	5%	21,649
Institution	7%	31,679
Supervised Independent Living	1%	4,599
Runaway	1%	4,660
Trial Home Visit	5%	21,566

Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
Reunify with Parent(s) or Principal Caretaker(s)	55%	233,108
Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	12,993
Adoption	26%	109,482
Long Term Foster Care	3%	10,549
Emancipation	4%	17,394
Guardianship	3%	14,491
Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	5%	22,485

¹ 'FY' refers to the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1st through September 30th.

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by Oct 20, 2017 are included in this report. Missing data are excluded from each table. Therefore, the totals within each distribution may not equal the total provided for that subpopulation (e.g. number in care on September 30th may not match the sum across ages for that group)

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	10,366
Asian	1%	2,290
Black or African American	23%	101,825
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	936
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	91,352
White	44%	191,433
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	8,418
Two or more Races	7%	30,224

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Time in Care	Months
Mean	20.1
Median	12.7

Time in Care (Months)	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	6%	24,071
1 - 5 Months	22%	95,884
6 - 11 Months	20%	89,315
12 - 17 Months	15%	67,509
18 - 23 Months	10%	43,507
24 - 29 Months	8%	32,830
30 - 35 Months	5%	20,662
3 - 4 Years	9%	37,998
5 Years or More	6%	25,620

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2016 • N=273,539

Age at Entry	Years
Mean	7.2
Median	6.3

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	18%	49,234
1 Year	8%	20,709
2 Years	7%	18,282
3 Years	6%	16,236
4 Years	5%	14,610
5 Years	5%	13,724
6 Years	5%	13,260
7 Years	5%	12,897
8 Years	4%	11,923
9 Years	4%	11,051
10 Years	4%	9,935
11 Years	3%	9,270
12 Years	3%	9,491
13 Years	4%	10,532
14 Years	4%	12,172
15 Years	5%	13,976
16 Years	5%	14,338
17 Years	4%	10,439
18 Years	0%	1,098
19 Years	0%	224
20 Years	0%	96

Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	6,033
Asian	1%	1,696
Black or African American	21%	58,211
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	702
Hispanic (of any race)	20%	54,722
White	47%	127,152
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	6,090
Two or more Races	7%	18,195

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Circumstances Associated With Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Neglect	61%	166,679
Drug Abuse (Parent)	34%	92,107
Caretaker Inability To Cope	14%	37,857
Physical Abuse	12%	33,671
Child Behavior Problem	11%	28,829
Housing	10%	27,871
Parent Incarceration	8%	20,939
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	6%	15,143
Abandonment	5%	12,889
Sexual Abuse	4%	9,904
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	6,273
Child Disability	2%	4,554
Relinquishment	1%	2,694
Parent Death	1%	2,212
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	1,242

NOTE: These categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100% and counts will be more than the total number of entries.

Children Exiting Foster Care during FY 2016 • N=250,248

Age at Exit	Years
Mean	8.8
Median	7.8

Age at Exit	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	11,153
1 Year	8%	20,382
2 Years	8%	20,610
3 Years	7%	17,845
4 Years	6%	15,517
5 Years	6%	14,348
6 Years	5%	13,451
7 Years	5%	12,953
8 Years	5%	12,063
9 Years	5%	11,283
10 Years	4%	9,721
11 Years	4%	8,934
12 Years	3%	8,172
13 Years	3%	8,166
14 Years	4%	9,006
15 Years	4%	10,066
16 Years	5%	11,742
17 Years	5%	11,618
18 Years	7%	18,017
19 Years	2%	3,901
20 Years	0%	666

Time in Care	Months
Mean	19.0
Median	13.9

Time in care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	10%	24,602
1 - 5 Months	15%	37,771
6 - 11 Months	20%	49,113
12 - 17 Months	16%	40,796
18 - 23 Months	12%	30,494
24 - 29 Months	9%	21,272
30 - 35 Months	6%	14,259
3 - 4 Years	9%	22,070
5 Years or More	4%	9,388

Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	5,125
Asian	1%	1,605
Black or African American	22%	55,391
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	570
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	53,004
White	45%	112,779
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,258
Two or more Races	7%	17,225

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Reasons for Discharge	Percent	Number
Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	51%	125,975
Living with Other Relative(s)	7%	16,306
Adoption	23%	56,507
Emancipation	8%	20,532
Guardianship	10%	23,659
Transfer to Another Agency	2%	4,336
Runaway	0%	881
Death of Child	0%	320

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2016 • N=117,794

Age as of September 30th	Years
Mean	7.7
Median	6.9

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	4,326
1 Year	10%	11,226
2 Years	9%	11,190
3 Years	8%	9,577
4 Years	7%	8,315
5 Years	6%	7,514
6 Years	6%	6,885
7 Years	6%	6,820
8 Years	6%	6,670
9 Years	5%	6,244
10 Years	5%	5,834
11 Years	5%	5,405
12 Years	4%	4,929
13 Years	4%	4,960
14 Years	4%	4,862
15 Years	4%	5,166
16 Years	4%	4,493
17 Years	3%	3,378

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Years
Mean	5.1
Median	4.2

Age at Entry into Foster Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	25%	29,811
1 Year	9%	10,154
2 Years	8%	8,934
3 Years	7%	8,177
4 Years	7%	7,660
5 Years	6%	7,558
6 Years	6%	7,312
7 Years	6%	6,661
8 Years	5%	5,988
9 Years	5%	5,361
10 Years	4%	4,754
11 Years	4%	4,143
12 Years	3%	3,724
13 Years	3%	3,152
14 Years	2%	2,269
15 Years	1%	1,415
16 Years	1%	600
17 Years	0%	94

Placement type	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	13%	14,765
Foster Family Home (Relative)	26%	30,954
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	52%	60,595
Group Home	3%	3,751
Institution	5%	6,195
Supervised Independent Living	0%	106
Runaway	0%	454
Trial Home Visit	1%	720

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	61,730
Female	48%	56,058

Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	2,302
Asian	0%	455
Black or African American	23%	26,709
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	152
Hispanic (of any race)	22%	25,822
White	44%	51,279
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	1,799
Two or more Races	8%	9,245

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

³ Waiting children are identified as children who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. Children 16 years old and older whose parents' parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation have been excluded from the estimate.

Time in Care	Months
Mean	31.2
Median	25.0

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	0%	463
1 - 5 Months	4%	4,190
6 - 11 Months	10%	11,442
12 - 17 Months	17%	19,957
18 - 23 Months	17%	19,463
24 - 29 Months	15%	17,631
30 - 35 Months	10%	11,807
3 - 4 Years	18%	21,495
5 Years or More	10%	11,346

Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated (N=65,274), Time elapsed since termination of parental rights as of September 30, 2016

Time since TPR	Months
Mean	18.2
Median	9.0

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2016⁴ • N=57,208

Age at Adoption	Years
Mean	6.2
Median	5.2

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,276
1 Year	12%	7,055
2 Years	14%	8,085
3 Years	11%	6,301
4 Years	9%	5,103
5 Years	8%	4,446
6 Years	7%	3,891
7 Years	6%	3,629
8 Years	6%	3,162
9 Years	5%	2,859
10 Years	4%	2,329
11 Years	4%	2,040
12 Years	3%	1,608
13 Years	2%	1,407
14 Years	2%	1,175
15 Years	2%	1,014
16 Years	2%	920
17 Years	1%	758
18 Years	0%	98
19 Years	0%	25
20 Years	0%	18

Time elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Months
Mean	11.8
Median	8.7

Time elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	2%	1,222
1-5 Months	29%	16,435
6-11 Months	35%	19,848
12-17 Months	17%	9,437
18-23 Months	7%	4,088
24-29 Months	4%	2,167
30-35 Months	2%	1,037
3-4 Years	3%	1,501
5 Years or more	1%	541

Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2%	970
Asian	0%	235
Black or African American	17%	9,988
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	80
Hispanic (of any race)	22%	12,371
White	49%	27,776
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	772
Two or more Races	9%	4,991

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

⁴ Note that the adoption data reported in this section are from the AFCARS Adoption file. Therefore, the number of adoptions reported here may not equal the number reported as discharges to adoption from foster care.

Adoptive Family Structure	Percent	Number
Married Couple	69%	38,840
Unmarried Couple	3%	1,786
Single Female	25%	14,049
Single Male	3%	1,967

Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	14%	7,725
Foster Parent	52%	29,044
Stepparent	0%	51
Other Relative	34%	18,854

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	51%	29,281
Female	49%	27,923

Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Yes	92%	52,795
No	8%	4,371

FY 2016 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

With this release of the AFCARS FY 2016 foster care data the Children's Bureau would like to bring to the attention of the readers/users of the AFCARS data our continuing efforts in addressing data quality issues associated with the AFCARS data. The Children's Bureau is currently focusing on the issue of dropped cases which is described below.

Historically the Children's Bureau has been aware of the data quality issue involving "Dropped Cases", i.e., cases which appear in one six-month AFCARS submission without a date of discharge and do not appear in the subsequent six-month submission. The following link's "Technical Discussion" tab provides a more detailed description of the "Dropped Cases" issue.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/trends-in-foster-care-and-adoption>

Early in our efforts to understand the dropped cases issue it was understood that the majority fell into a category of those exiting care, however more recent analyses includes a category of instances in which record numbers change, i.e., child records undergo a merge process, hence the child's record is in the subsequent submission but with a different record number. The records merge process typically happens when a child's information exists in the State's information system but the child is inadvertently assigned a new record number, sometimes due to a re-entry into care. We do not believe the two aforementioned categories account for all dropped cases.

We have historically addressed the dropped cases by excluding these records from our AFCARS estimates, and we believe this has ameliorated most negative effects on the annual estimates. Although there has been some decrease in the numbers of "Dropped Cases," given that the problem still exists, we are now formally addressing the issue with each applicable State beginning with the 2017 AFCARS data. To the extent practicable and reasonable we will attempt to address prior year's data.